



Newsletter
Autumn 2018

Moor Trees

creating native woodland

Registered Office

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Registered charity
No. 1081142

Director Adam Owen's update

Welcome to another Moor Trees newsletter. Since I joined **Moor Trees** as Director I have certainly learnt that the role is varied! First priorities were to review the IT system and ensure the PC and internet were working; then it was dealing with GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) before the May deadline - now a distant memory; and generally finding my way through all the paper and electronic files. I was straight into the accounts to finalise the year end in readiness for the financial audit and before I knew it summer was upon us.



I finally got out to Upcott Grange Farm and Hill Crest to see the 7000 trees staff and volunteers had planted the previous winter. I had the luxury of visiting those sites on a hot summer's day, a startling contrast to the rain and snow I had been told was endured for weeks by those planting.

Summer also brought some new partnerships. **Moor Trees** has been working closely with the Environment Agency on the Dartmoor Headwaters project ([page 7](#)). **Moor Trees** and the Environment Agency hope to plant many more trees in the coming years adjacent to Dartmoor's stream and rivers.



...planting in the snow at Hill Crest

The Woodland Trust has asked if we can supply them with trees for local projects and recently we were audited to join their 'UK Sourced and Grown Assurance Scheme' (UKSG). The Woodland Trust is aiming to reduce their reliance on imported planting stock and the risk of importing pests and diseases. The scheme guarantees that those trees grown by participating nurseries marked with the UKSG badge are raised from seed sourced only from the UK and grown on in the UK for their entire lifespan. **Moor Trees** hopes to join the scheme in the New Year and will produce many more trees for the Woodland Trust. We will also continue to work with landowners to plant trees on their land and still provide trees to other buyers.

Interestingly this year we have received many more individual requests for native broad-leaved trees. It seems people are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of woodland and its benefits and are seeking to plant more trees on their land. Thankfully, the government has also recognised this and now the Woodland Creation Grant is open for applications all year round, rather than the few months it used to be, making it easier for **Moor Trees** to work with landowners and promote native woodland.

In late summer we had another lovely day out at Woodah Farm for our AGM (see [page 6](#)).

We have recently overhauled our website (www.moortrees.org) and created a new look. The new website is much fresher, easier to access information as well as make payments and simpler to update.

And now we are back to our planting season, having collected much seed. You can find about recent seed collecting and activities in the tree nurseries on [page 2](#)

I hope to see some, if not all of you, out planting this winter and I look forward to working with you in the months ahead.

All the best,

Adam

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Jon Covey on this year's abundant seed harvest

Wow! What a year it has been! At last it finally stopped raining towards the end of April. Then there were 24 weeks of dry, warm, sunny summer days. Consequently this year's tree growth has been astonishing! In the space of four months, twelve of the native tree species we grow at Broadley had grown from 6cm to 60 cm in height. Careful, targeted and frequent watering of the saplings in the initial period after being planted out in the tree nursery beds ensured their roots went down to the reservoir of moisture deeper down in the soil. Coupled with mulching to reduce competition with weeds and conserve moisture and nutrients in the soil, the result has been an excellent growing season. A big thank you to all our skilful and dedicated volunteers.

We collect all the seeds for the 17 tree species we grow. This year's main collection sites have been Hembury, Blackadon Tor, Newbridge, Dunsford, Shaugh Prior & Broadley Farm. Seed supply has been plentiful, especially *Quercus robur*, the pedunculate oak, with masses of acorns dropping off the trees. This year 110kg of acorns (approximately 32000) were collected —more than double last year's total! Interestingly, there were hardly any acorns on *Quercus petraea*, the sessile oak which predominates at Hembury and Yarner woods. Sessile oak prefers wetter conditions, so maybe five months of very dry weather inhibited their acorn development and growth this year.



A good year for acorns!

We mainly collect tree seed from the few remaining ancient woodlands within the Dartmoor National Park area but we will occasionally collect seeds from other accessible locations where there is a huge seed crop - with the landowners' permission of course. This happened this October when the volunteer group walked around Broadley Farm and the tree nursery and collected 56 kg of acorns (approximately 16000 acorns) in a few hours. Veteran trees and younger oaks here were all looking in good health and growing with vigour. These oaks have in the past always germinated well and grown strongly and will add to the overall genetic mix of the oaks we grow, plant and supply.

Processing the seeds we collect increases their chances of successful germination. We use different methods of processing and storing seeds depending on the tree species and also different seed sowing techniques. These methods and processes are updated and refined each year to try and achieve successful and consistent germination rates.

Moor Trees is looking to increase its tree production at both our nurseries with a view to supplying interested organisations - and also Moor Trees members - with trees for their own planting. Members will get a 15% discount on their tree purchases from April next year. All this is in addition to the 7000 trees we grow for **Moor Trees** planting schemes.

Finally, our deer friends pitched up at the Broadley nursery 'diner' recently only to find access was prohibited because of the deer fence we erected last year. They left a few tell tale footprints and nibbled a few saplings the other side of the fence then they mooched off to try their luck elsewhere!



Meanwhile at Dartington Nursery it's been *Man v Rodent!* Jon Brock elaborates...

2018 has been a seminal year for **Moor Trees** at Dartington nursery. After another poor year for Oak germination, due to vole predation of acorns planted directly into ground level beds, forward looking action was required. Only 250 - 300 oak seedlings had appeared from the 8000 acorns planted. Upon inspection vole tunnels were found criss-crossing the acorn beds like a mini road network.



Field vole
(*Microtus agrestis*)

I decided to create raised beds where acorns would be out of reach of voles and other rodents. First attempts were not very successful, in fact more of a disaster. Initially a wooden table made with scaffolding planks and wooden legs was constructed. One-litre used drinks cartons were filled with compost and an acorn planted in each pot. These were placed on the table (about 1m from the ground). Excellent I thought! What could possibly go wrong? Two days later I returned excitedly to check, the 100 or so pots volunteers had diligently planted. Every single pot had been plundered by the rampaging rodents! They had simply climbed the legs!



800 vole-proof potted oaks

I know, I thought, let's put a plastic netting cover round the pots, on the table; that should do the trick! Another 100 acorns pots were prepared eagerly. A few days later upon inspection - the same result! All gone! This time after scaling the legs those pesky rodents had just chewed through the netting. So 2-0 to the little guys! Although initially disappointing, my respect for these tenacious tiny furry friends was actually increasing: I love how nature keeps going and never gives in—what an inspiration! Thanks to Brian Daniel and Colin Shazell these problems were overcome. Wooden legs were replaced with metal legs fashioned from discarded school tables. A waterproof wooden board was then fixed on top of these and finally topped off with a galvanised fine wire mesh frame that was screwed onto the table. Dartington now has three such raised beds and not a single acorn has been lost. Success at last!

The planting of oaks in pots has benefits. Primarily, when the trees are ready to plant out you don't have to dig them up, which often damages the roots terminally. They will also require less maintenance throughout the year and smaller more manageable trees will be produced for final planting. We will grow all the native tree species in pots this coming year and I am confident that this will be a major part of our tree production in the future.

Citizens' Science

Last summer in a new **Moor Trees** initiative, trustee, volunteer and PhD student **Tom Murphy** led a 'Citizens' Science' day of walking and talking about the impacts of climate change on Dartmoor



PhD student Tom Murphy led the walk

One Sunday in August, Moor Trees' volunteers, trustees and staff together with members of the Dartmoor Preservation Association (DPA), Plymouth University students and academics and members of the public met at Cornwood for a for a 'Citizens' Science' day of walking and talking about the impacts of climate change on Dartmoor and the potential for woodlands to deliver multiple benefits for communities in Devon. The event was organised and led by Moor Trees trustee and PhD student Tom Murphy.

Tom, together with environmental scientist Dr. Paul Lunt of Plymouth University, briefed us on climate change evidence and projections for Dartmoor before talking about the growing flood risks to communities in and around Dartmoor and the recently launched Dartmoor Headwaters project by the Environment Agency. Tom then went on to explain the background to his PhD project and described how his study aims to fill knowledge gaps on the impact of woodlands on flood risk identified by the Environment Agencies, 'Working with Natural Processes' report.

The minibus took us to the start of the walk at East Rook Gate. From there we walked across High House waste and into Hawns and Dendles on the way to Tom's experiment site situated at Dendles Waste on the upper banks of the Yealm. The area is currently being managed as both woodland and moorland restoration sites after a conifer plantation was removed from Dendles Waste in the 90's. Whilst crossing onto Hawns and Dendles, the lifting mist allowed views down Broadall lake. The lower grazing intensity of HHW and Hawns and Dendles Wastes contrasted starkly with the adjacent common.

On the way to Tom's site, in the natural amphitheatre of a bronze age round house, we had lunch while **Moor Trees** trustee Tim Ferry gave an informative and very interesting talk on the Bronze age settlement in High House Waste and highlighted the continuity of agricultural activity on Dartmoor as well as the climate change which caused its abandonment.



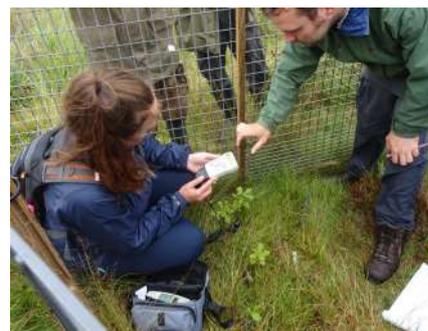
Tim Ferry gave a talk on the Bronze age settlement in High House Waste

Paul Lunt shared his knowledge of woodlands as well as the mosaic of habitats of which Dartmoor comprises. He also explained Natural Flood Management and how woodland is one of the options being

considered by authorities due to the evidence that trees help alleviate soil compaction and could be used to reduce flood risk.

After lunch, Tom led us to his research site. He explained that his experiment investigates the tolerance of one year old Oak saplings to different soil conditions and grazing pressures.

Volunteers were given the opportunity to help Tom take measurements from the infant Oak trees (which had been supplied by **Moor Trees**). Tree stress and soil water readings were recorded using a Photosynthesis Efficiency Analyser (PEA) and a Theta Probe.



Tom explains how to use a photosynthesis efficiency analyser

The group then walked into Dendles Woodland to experience the splendour of this mature woodland - and SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest). A great place to discover the multiple benefits woodlands provide whilst also offering a flood mitigation option.

Paul Harrison

John Burden



Many of our newsletter readership will know our dear friend, John Burden who has been a dedicated and regular volunteer with **Moor Trees** for the past 12 years. Since Christmas 2017 he has had a few setbacks with his physical health and mobility. Renowned for diving head first down a rabbit hole to surprise its inhabitants, he remains an enthusiastic and committed volunteer to this day. He has enjoyed the regular visits and updates from his **Moor Trees** family. In recognition of his outstanding contribution to volunteering we presented him with a beautifully restored two-seater bench in his favourite spot at Broadley.



Tim Ferry attended the DNP management plan workshop, *Farming and Forestry*, on behalf of Moor Trees.



Dartmoor National Park (DNP) has an over-arching Management Plan which it revises every 5 years.

This is intended to provide guidelines for its day-to-day decision-making in all its areas of responsibility (access, business, communities, nature, planning etc) This, itself is set within a longer-term vision of how the Park should develop over the next 25 years. The current Management Plan runs out at the end of 2019.

Possessing very little actual power, the National Park Authority has to operate entirely through influence, co-operation and partnership, so it is vital that the Management Plan as far as possible reflects the aspirations of the people and organisations with a stake in Dartmoor. To try and achieve this (near impossible) task it has organised a series of six themed workshops attended by invited representatives of relevant bodies. On 7 November I went to one of these, entitled *Farming and Forestry*, on behalf of Moor Trees.

There were, I guess, around 30 to 40 people there, and, to make it work, we were separated into smaller discussion groups. I was really lucky to share a table with the Duchy of Cornwall Land Steward, three Dartmoor farmers/commoners, the Chairman of the Dartmoor Preservation Association, the Head of Conservation at the

National Park and representatives of Natural England, the National Trust and the Dartmoor Commons Owners.

We were asked to do two things (in the context of farming and forestry):

- help build a picture of Dartmoor as it is now, highlighting its strengths and weaknesses;
- Help define a vision for the future, based on the aspirations of our various interest groups, but importantly having regard to such significant external factors as Brexit, climate change, population pressure, the Government's 25-year Environment Plan and the likely shake-up of taxpayer financial support to agriculture.

With a great deal of help in advance from the **Moor Trees** Trustees and Management, my contributions to these two parts were:

Current situation

According to the National Park's own figures, only 8% of the Park is covered by broad-leaved woodland (another 4% is forestry plantation). Broad-leaved woodland is one of the richest landscape types for: biodiversity, carbon-capture, downstream flood-mitigation, water quality, air quality and public enjoyment. Given that, not only is the present area of it woefully inadequate, but it is, for historical reasons, too disjointed to function properly as an ecosystem.

Future vision

Using primarily the lever of the proposed Environmental Land Management Contracts as a means of delivering taxpayer support to farmers, a strategic approach should be taken to identify areas where broadleaved

woodland is the most beneficial land-use and make it financially viable for landowners and commoners to plant trees or allow natural regeneration. This will mainly be: river valleys, areas next to or linking existing woodland and other areas not prioritised for grassland, heather/bilberry moorland, blanket bog etc.

By its very nature, the workshop was a messy brain-storming session in which a vast number of contradictory, complementary and overlapping ideas were put forward. While inevitably there were voices expressing the desire to preserve the status quo, I was impressed by the general openness to new thinking, not least from two of the three farmers in my group.

Moor Trees' views were listened to with respect and a fair measure of agreement, especially from the representatives of the forestry sector who were unfortunately all in a different discussion group together. It was also an excellent networking opportunity, and I gave a number of Moor Trees Vision leaflets to fellow delegates, some of whom may be able to lead us to new planting sites.

This was the first meeting of this kind that I have taken part in, and I very much enjoyed the experience. To some extent I was able to use it as a practice session, as I will be back in the same room on 21 November for the *Natural Environment* workshop.

Woodlands News Clips

National Trust Outdoor Festival

This year **Moor Trees** was invited to work with artist Dr Bram Thomas Arnold on an environmental installation at the National Trust's South Outdoor Festival. 'Transparent Modular Specifics' was a performance installation featuring an assembly line that was busy making moulds and casts. Visitors at the festival input their data into a solar powered laptop and the data was then processed by a bespoke algorithm that generated a number representing the physical cost in carbon dioxide equivalent of each individual on site.

The assembly line staff then took a physical imprint of each individual's footprint and used this to make a plaster cast of the footprint, the installation's output. Embedded into the plaster cast was a native sapling, provided by **Moor Trees** to be planted out on Howton Down at Seale Hayne near Newton Abbot. The species was chosen according to the individual's 'cost' as produced by the algorithm. The higher the ecological impact of an individual was, the higher the carbon sequestration capacity was of the tree species embedded in their footprint.

There was also an 'in conversation' between Adam Owen, Director of **Moor Trees**, Dr Bram Thomas Arnold and the audience. The topic was wide ranging covering who **Moor Trees** are; a brief history of native broadleaf woodland in the UK; the history of woodland and animal husbandry on Dartmoor; through to Carbon Sequestration, and to what extent is it a distraction from the real problems of climate change; the relationship between anonymously planted trees and trees planted to which you have a connection; and even if the best time to plant a tree is always thirty years ago is it still worth planting one today?

Whilst the weather was not the kindest, participation was lively and provided **Moor Trees** with a different opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of tree planting and expanding and connecting our woodlands on and around Dartmoor. It is hoped that **Moor Trees** can be involved in future events.

'Celtic rainforests' across Wales will receive £8.6m (€9.5m) in funding to return them to their former glory.

Woodlands in Snowdonia, Cwm Einion, Cwm Doethie and the Elan Valley will receive the funding from the EU and Welsh government.

The Environment Minister says the woods are a "valuable natural asset". The woodlands are considered important because of their mild, humid conditions, which support a great biodiversity of mosses, lichens and liverworts. The open structure of the rainforests has traditionally allowed mosses and liverworts to thrive, but the invasion of Rhododendron has threatened the conservation status of the woodlands.

The project will be led by the Snowdonia National Park Authority along with RSPB Cymru, Natural Resources Wales, Welsh Water, the Woodland Trust and the National Trust. Emyr Williams from the authority says the funding will "restore and safeguard our woodlands".

10,000 new trees to boost roadside wildlife habitat in the South West

Under its National Biodiversity Plan - supported by a £30m national investment programme - Highways England has undertaken a major programme of tree and shrub planting along the A30 and A38 in a bid to create a 106 mile corridor of wildlife habitat. Taking place across 21 sites in Devon and Cornwall, the work involves the planting of 10,000 native trees and shrubs to fill or reduce gaps in hedgerow and woodland along the roadside.

The planting will provide around three extra miles of vegetation and connect more than 105 miles of habitat on verges and land adjacent to the A30 and A38. The plan recognises that road verges and associated land can be managed to provide areas of habitat relatively free from human access which may be scarce in the surrounding landscape.

Road verges can also be used to connect fragmented habitats in the wider landscape, enabling plant and animal populations to move and interact and thus become stronger and more resilient.

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/highways-england

Naomi Wisbey reports on this year's AGM

This was our third year hosting the Moor Trees Annual General Meeting at Woodah Farm in the Teign Valley. Woodah Farm is home to the Devon Wildlife Trust's nature reserves team and is used as a rural skills centre. It is set in 140 acres of semi-improved grassland and has an orchard of heritage varieties of apples, hedgerows supporting bats and dormice, wild flower meadows and woodland.

Attending this year's meeting were 15 members and volunteers and also guest speaker Tim Lee from the Environment Agency and Josh Pawlowski who has made a virtual reality film about **Moor Trees**. This was new director Adam Owen's first AGM, so an opportunity for members to meet him.

This year, sadly, Guy Gilmore stood down as a trustee, treasurer and secretary. Guy was a founding member of **Moor Trees** and his 19 years' work with us has shaped what **Moor Trees** has become. We hope he will continue to be involved in **Moor Trees** as much as his busy schedule allows (see you at the Christmas party Guy!). The rest of the existing trustees stood again and were all re-elected. Josh counted the votes. Jon Covey was elected as treasurer and Naomi Wisbey as the new secretary. The full list of trustees is listed on the back page of this newsletter.



The volunteering certificates of achievement were presented and this year's grand total was 4,645 hours! Jon Covey volunteered an amazing 790 hours and Collin Shazell, over 600 hours. Long term volunteer John Burden managed to volunteer 135 hours despite not being able to volunteer with us for much of 2018 due to personal ill health. (see page 3)

During the meeting we agreed to change the annual members subscription rates (which had remained static for over 10 years) and to introduce a Joint membership option for two people living at the same address. The new standard membership rate will be £20 and low income will be £10. The new list of rates will be available on the **Moor Trees** website from 1 April 2019.

Next year will be **Moor Trees** 20th anniversary and we will be organising a joint celebration to mark this along with our 90,000th tree.

The meeting was followed by a showing of Josh's excellent film about **Moor Trees** which he produced for the final project of his degree at Falmouth University. The film is available to watch on the **Moor Trees** website and on YouTube.

As the trustees pointed out there are at least 10 mentions of cake during the film so we feel it is a wonderful representation of **Moor Trees**! The film also has virtual reality elements which can be seen on a smart phone or ipad.

Tim Lee from the environment agency gave a talk about the Dartmoor headwaters project, which he has kindly summarised on page 7.

After the AGM, we had a delicious lunch and then set off on our usual post AGM seed collecting walk—chance to digest lunch and discuss the meeting with the other members and volunteers, as well as collect field maple, hawthorn, spindle and other native seeds from the abundant hedgerows of Woodah Farm.



...off for our usual post AGM walk

Major certificates of achievement for volunteering

500 hours or more

Jon Covey (790), Colin Shazell (600)

200 hours or more

Robin Lee (280), Paul Harrison (260), Tim Ferry (240)

100 hours or more

Naomi Wisbey (195), Tom Murphy (175), Jill Broom (155), Chris Curry (155),



Claire Truscott (145), John Burden (135), Phil Warren (135)

50 hours or more

Judith Allen (85), Nick Kinnegan (80), Kathy Hayman (75), Susan Widlake (60), Ellie Standen (55), Guy Chaplin (50) Janet Cotter (50)

25 hours or more

Julia Widlake (25), Sam Pilbrow (25), David Williams (25)

The Dartmoor Headwaters Natural Flood Management Project

Dartmoor is often subject to rapid flash flooding events which are largely caused by the region's topography and Dartmoor being the first high elevation land mass that rain fronts coming in from the Atlantic Ocean hit.



The Dartmoor headwaters project is a pilot study being carried out by the Environment Agency looking at the effectiveness of using natural river processes, land management and soft engineering approaches to reduce the risk of

flooding and improve water quality and biodiversity. The project is being run by Tim Lee - Environment Agency Flood & Coastal Risk Management Officer and Kerry Smith - Dartmoor National Park Authority Natural Flood Management Officer.

Five sub-catchments have been identified to implement measures within; these fall inside the larger River Dart, River Tavy, River Erme and River Walkham catchments. The catchments were chosen following an extensive opportunity mapping and consultation process to identify areas that a) would benefit from a reduction in flood risk, b) would contribute useful additions to the national picture of natural flood management performance, and c) would provide useful learning to extrapolate out across the wider area of Dartmoor. All of the catchments chosen have the same broad characteristics:

- small in size (all less than 13km²);
- have a mixture of open access and agricultural land;
- steep and have rapid onset of flooding;
- contain small rural communities where a 'traditional' scheme will not be viable due to high costs, or the absence of enough partnership funding;
- have the ability to influence land management to link more effectively with flood risk reduction measures.

Within the identified catchments there are 84 properties at risk of flooding *Main River*. There are also an additional number of properties at risk of flooding from *runoff* which are not captured in our current floodplain and surface water flood map extents.

Work in each catchment will follow a hierarchy of measures where first the restoration of natural processes such as infiltration and floodplain reconnection is investigated before the creation of more engineered structures such as attenuation features are explored. Measures being studied as part of the project include:

- soil remedies (de-compaction, slit aeration, soil husbandry advice);
- infiltration pits;
- floodplain reconnection;
- tree planting;
- Peat-land restoration (blanket bog and valley mire);
- reduction of heather 'swaling' burn areas on flow routes;
- mine working remediation and gully blocking;
- stone attenuation dams;

- planting of new hedges and Devon Banks;
- wetland creation;
- river restoration and buffering;
- vegetated swales.

The project aims to examine the scale of the problem at the source (i.e. soils, and the amount of runoff they are producing) as well as the effectiveness of in channel features such as ditch blocking and leaky woody structures.

The scheme is predominately funded through Flood Defence Grant in Aid but has contributions, or contributions in kind from: Dartmoor National Park Authority, Highways England and Plymouth University, Devon County Council, Devon Wildlife Trust, **Moor Trees** and others.

A key element for a project which requires land management changes at a catchment scale is having **time**:

- time to engage with rural communities affected by flooding;
- time to work with landowners to decide what changes would work with their business and existing grant schemes;
- time to identify the best locations to make interventions slow and store water;
- time to monitor the effectiveness of these interventions.

The anticipated outcomes of the project will be, a measureable reduction in flood risk to properties currently adversely affected by flooding and also being able to demonstrate that natural flood management can make a difference in reducing flood peaks and to sedimentation. It is hoped that the project will also be able to deliver wider *multiple benefits* including: improvements to water quality and local drinking water supply, an increase in the biodiversity of the upper moor, an improvement in functionality and productivity of agricultural and common land, and additional visibility and appreciation of the environment to both local residents and the tourist economy.

Tim Lee

Tim Lee is Environment Agency Flood & Coastal Risk Management Officer

The Dartmoor headwaters project can be contacted at:
DartmoorNFM@environment-agency.gov.uk



Ever wanted your own native woodland?

If you have land and would like woodland planted then contact **Moor Trees!**

We can arrange a site visit, give planning and grant funding advice, and subject to funding provide the native trees and even plant them for you.

We source native broadleaved tree seed locally from Dartmoor and with the help of our volunteers grow trees from the seed in our two tree nurseries.

To date we have planted **49 new woodlands** across Dartmoor and Devon, establishing over **82 hectares** and planted **over 82, 000 trees.**

For more information:
visit www.moortrees.org
email info@moortrees.org
or call our director
Adam Owen on 01364 649 277

From this



...to this in a few years!



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Our patrons:

Sir Jonathon Porritt
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